

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend the claims as set forth on the following pages.

1           1.       (Currently Amended) For use with a flexible strap having a substantially uniform  
2 width and thickness and an end tab of increased thickness, a buckle for capturing and releasably  
3 retaining said end tab, said buckle comprising:

4                   a base;

5                   parallel side walls extending upwardly from and cooperating with said base to

6                           define an open-ended receiving channel having an entry end and an exit

7                           end;

8                   first slots extending transversally across said base, said buckle being attached to

9                           said strap by weaving said strap into and out of said channel through said

10                           first slots;

11                   flanges spaced vertically from said base and extending inwardly in cantilever

12                           fashion from said side walls to define an open-ended second slot

13                           communicating with and extending along the length of said receiving

14                           channel, said second slot being configured and dimensioned to

15                           accommodate longitudinal pinching and lateral insertion of said strap into

16                           said receiving channel, and said flanges having undersides configured to

17                           accommodate receipt of said end tab in said receiving channel via said

18                           entry end, and to releasably retain and prevent withdrawal of said end tab

19                           from said receiving channel via said exit end.

1           2.       (Withdrawn) The buckle of claim 1 wherein said flanges have converging sections  
2 leading from a maximum width of said slot at the entry end of said receiving channel to a reduced  
3 width of said slot at an intermediate location along the length of said channel.

1           3.     (Withdrawn) The buckle of claim 1 wherein said end tab defines a shoulder  
2 extending transversally across the width of said strap, and wherein the undersides of said flanges  
3 define stop surfaces engageable with said shoulder.

1           4.     (Withdrawn) The buckle of claim 3 wherein the undersides of said flanges further  
2 define jamming surfaces sloping downwardly towards said stop surfaces.

1           5.     (Withdrawn) The buckle of claim 1 wherein said base is secured to a section of  
2 said strap.

1           6.     (Withdrawn) The buckle of claim 1 wherein said base is formed as an integral  
2 part of a carrier structure.

1           7.     (Withdrawn) The buckle of claim 1 further comprising attachment slots  
2 extending transversally across said base, said buckle being attached to said strap by weaving said  
3 strap into and out of said channel through said attachment slots.

1           8.     (Original) For use with a flexible strap having a width and thickness and an end  
2 tab of increased thickness, a buckle for capturing and releasably retaining said end tab, said  
3 buckle comprising:

4                 a base;

5                 parallel side walls extending upwardly from said base to cooperate

6                         therewith in defining an open-ended receiving channel;

7                 flanges spaced vertically from said base and extending inwardly

8                         from said side walls to define an open-ended slot communicating

9                         with said receiving channel, said flanges having converging sections

10 leading from one end of said slot to an intermediate location  
11 along the length thereof, said slot being configured and  
12 dimensioned to accommodate longitudinal pinching and lateral insertion  
13 of said strap into said receiving channel, and said converging sections of  
14 said flanges having undersides configured to coact with said base in  
15 releasably wedging said end tab in said receiving channel.

1 9. (New) For use with a flexible strap having a substantially uniform width and  
2 thickness and an end tab of increased thickness, a buckle for capturing and releasably retaining  
3 said end tab, said buckle comprising:

1 a base;  
2 parallel side walls extending upwardly from and cooperating with said  
3 base to define an open-ended receiving channel having an entry end and  
4 an exit end;  
5 flanges spaced vertically from said base and extending inwardly in cantilever  
6 fashion from said side walls to define an open-ended slot communicating  
7 with and extending along the length of said receiving channel, said slot  
8 being configured and dimensioned to accommodate longitudinal pinching  
9 and lateral insertion of said strap into said receiving channel, and said  
10 flanges having undersides with downwardly sloping jamming surfaces  
11 configured to frictionally retain said end tab in said receiving channel.

1 10. (New) The buckle of claims 1 or 9 wherein said flanges have converging sections  
2 leading from a maximum width of said slot at the entry end of said receiving channel to a  
3 reduced width of said slot at an intermediate location along the length of said channel.

1           11.   (New) The buckle of claims 1, 8 or 9 wherein said end tab defines a shoulder  
2   extending transversally across the width of said strap, and wherein the undersides of said flanges  
3   define stop surfaces engageable with said shoulder.

1           12.   (New) The buckle of claim 11 wherein said jamming surfaces slope downwardly  
2   towards said stop surfaces.

1           13.   (New) The buckle of claims 8 or 9 wherein said base is secured to a section of  
2   said strap.

1           14.   (New) The buckle of claims 8 or 9 wherein said base is formed as an integral part  
2   of a carrier structure.

          15.   (New) The buckle of claim 13 further comprising attachment slots extending  
transversally across said base, said buckle being attached to said strap by weaving said strap into  
and out of said channel through said attachment slots.